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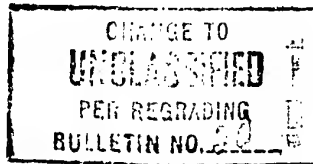
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CPW Report No. 61 -- USSR

(June - December 1952)

I N T R O D U C T I O N

1. The following report, reviewing the conclusions of CPW reports from May to October 1952, points out some of the more consistent themes and subthemes of internal Soviet propaganda, particularly regional propaganda, which indicate psychological vulnerabilities. For convenience the report is divided into four sections: Industry, Agriculture, Party Affairs, and Ideology.

2. From a survey of consistent criticisms in these four sectors of Soviet life arises some idea of the most irksome problems with which Soviet propagandists must deal, of the principal stresses operating in these fields, and of the pressures on a factory manager, Party bureaucrat, kolkhoz chairman, artist or historian aspiring to become successful in the Soviet Union today.

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INDUSTRY

A. The Factory Manager

1. The factory manager and the administrator in Soviet industry is the target of unceasing invective from Soviet propagandists. His tasks are consistently set forth as: (a) to cut costs, and (b) to increase output. He must manage both these tasks with a limited supply of raw materials and an insufficient labor force. His leaders, however, are apparently not so much concerned with how he achieves these two objectives as with his success. From the daily drone of criticism attacking nepotism, corruption, bribery, etc. it is apparent that in order to succeed many Soviet managers are almost compelled to make deals for raw materials, give hush money to Party officials, approve defective goods, patronize those who are in a position to ruin them, ride roughshod over those who are underneath, and even distort their reports to Party and State officials.

2. A fair idea of the factory manager's position can be deduced from the following almost daily criticisms directed at him. He is attacked for: bribery, both of those who supply him with raw materials and of those who must approve his products; high-handed and dictatorial attitude, e.g. stifling criticism from below, ignoring suggestions which may cast doubt on his administrative practices, etc.; bureaucratic attitude, e.g. writing orders and directives without following them through or seeing to it that they are implemented; inefficiency, letting things drift, complacency, placidity and conceit over "even the slightest successes"; "formalism," e.g. standing in the way of progress by resisting change and innovation; lack of responsibility or positive desire to shirk responsibility; bureaucratic concern only with meeting plan quotas and production deadlines and using various illegal devices to cover up shortcomings, e.g. padding accounts, publicizing non-existent achievements, including uncompleted jobs in plan fulfillment figures, hiding behind "average figures," and exerting pressure on the technical control department to approve defective goods; and finally, as an almost inevitable by-product of all of these administrative defects, of sacrificing quality to quantity in his products. (For example, the director of one of Moscow's largest plants, the "Kalibr," which specializes in precision tools, was recently accused of hiring relatives and friends, padding accounts, cheating the State and publicizing non-existent achievements. This charge has been on the increase generally of late.)

3. From this list of charges there are other conclusions besides that the factory manager is almost compelled to distort, bribe, extort and operate generally in an extremely individualistic and corrupt milieu. For one thing, he is apparently not only completely individualistic in shifting for himself and his plant, but is also essentially conservative and opposed to any changes in the status quo. For this attitude he is accused of "formalism." He does not give free rein to the innovators and rationalizers in his industry. He does not put new machinery into operation quickly enough. He does not accept criticism of his administrative practices from below. His primary interest and goal is not to improve Soviet industry but to meet the plan goal and the production deadline regardless of how inferior his ultimate product may be. He regards his workers as tools with which to meet the quota and is suspicious of any untried machinery which may ultimately result in reducing his labor force. He is completely ruthless in meeting his quota and if he does not meet it he will juggle figures to deceive his superiors.

4. If this description is even partially correct, it may be asked what this type of individual can really think about the social goals and supposedly anti-individualistic values of Socialism and Communism, and his apparent cynicism may usefully be presented in a variety of contexts to mass audiences.

B. The Worker

1. The Soviet worker is not so frequently a target of criticism as the plant manager or the administrator. This is in keeping with the Soviet practice of using the "middle" or the elite as a scapegoat and turning the bottom against it at periodic intervals, in an adaptation of the revolutionary mobilization of masses against the elite.

2. The most persistent criticisms directed against the worker are: working in spurts and finishing fast at the end of a month or planning period rather than working rhythmically and maintaining a steady and uniform pace of production (e.g., one factory in Leningrad was accused of supplying 80 per cent of all its production at the end of the month and operating at a "slack pace" the remainder of the time); violating labor discipline by absenteeism, tardiness, a careless attitude toward machinery, and resisting speed-up devices and Stakhanovism.

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3. Resistance to speed-up and Stakhanovism is seldom directly charged against the worker, but Party and trade union organizations in individual plants are accused of not "rendering support to the innovators of labor" and to those plants having "high-speed workers." A recent broadcast, for example, specifically stated that Georgian trade unions tended to balk at the adoption of techniques which would result in higher norms. Relative to the point is the consistent attack on trade unions, the Party and individual managers for not giving enough attention to Socialist Competition among individual workers and plants of allied industry.

4. These criticisms would suggest (a) that some of the Soviet workers "put out" only when they know they must realize a quota or a deadline, and otherwise are apathetic; (b) that a good portion of them strongly resent both Socialist Competition and Stakhanovism as a veiled attempt to extract more work from them; and (c) that many of them, like the plant manager himself for a different reason, are very wary about new techniques and new machinery which they may feel means displacement and transfer to a different type of work and possibly to different locations.

AGRICULTURE

A. The Kolkhoz Chairman

1. Like the factory manager, the chairman of a Soviet collective farm is the target of an unceasing cacophony of critical propaganda. Much of the criticism directed at him is very similar to that employed against the factory manager, i.e. corruption, a dictatorial attitude, bureaucracy, inefficiency, complacency, resisting change and innovation, shirking responsibility, covering up shortcomings, and sacrificing quantity to quality. The two principal distinctive sins of the kolkhoz chairman are: (a) participating in or permitting violations of the agricultural statute, "the immovable cornerstone of the Soviet system"; and (b) violating the kolkhoz "indivisible fund," a special fund set aside from kolkhoz profits for capital investment, purchase of new equipment, seeds, etc.

2. Like the factory manager, the kolkhoz chairman apparently soon realizes that his chances of rising in the Soviet constellation depend largely on success--regardless of how achieved. To dip into the "indivisible fund" which is closely audited and checked by Party officials obviously requires collusion with these officials. So does successful violation of the statute, e.g. stealing kolkhoz livestock, lumber, etc., misusing kolkhoz funds for private advantage. Thus the chairman surrounds himself with assistants who keep one eye closed, (usually they are friends, relatives, etc., an administrative practice which has been severely and continuously condemned as creating an un-Bolshevik "family circle" atmosphere); and carries on intrigues with local officials and private persons. Such collusion apparently takes place on several levels: (a) between the collective farm chairman and the Party officials in his district in order to cover up mutual shortcomings; (b) between the kolkhoz and the Machine Tractor stations who "frequently do not observe their mutual contractual obligations and conceal each other's poor quality work"; and (c) between the chairman and "certain individuals and greedy elements."

3. This type of collusion and thievery is apparently not isolated or rare. Its seriousness in the eyes of Soviet authorities can be judged from the example of one oblast which delegated its chief prosecutor to investigate every violation reported, however minor, and to bring the guilty parties to criminal trial. Similarly, the following properties were listed as returned to the kolkhoz between 1 January 1951 and 1 July 1952:

140.9 hectares of land; 1,350 head of various types of cattle; 10,988 fowl and 10 buildings. Reclaimed also were large quantities of lumber, produce, fodder and more than 360,000 rubles in cash. (Radyanska Ukraina, 31 July)

Criticism of these practices continues unabated in the Soviet press and on the radio. The struggle against collusion and theft is viewed as part of "the ruthless struggle against the tendency to acquire private property, a remnant of the bourgeois past," although it is never explained as to how these "bourgeois remnants" developed in some 80 per cent of the Soviet population born during the Soviet regime.

4. Another frequent criticism directed at the kolkhoz chairman is his poor utilization and handling of machinery. He is accused of overlooking poor servicing, technical defects in the machines, and of bringing on this condition by a "complete indifference to the needs of the tractor drivers and other mechanizers."

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5. The successful kolkhoz chairman, in short, is similar to the successful factory boss. He must be completely individualistic, ruthless, greedy, and suspicious of change. To satisfy the demands of his superiors, e.g. to meet the plan, he must collude with local Party officials, misrepresent and distort his figures, steal from the kolkhoz fund, surround himself with mediocre but obedient rubber stamps, and ignore the working and living conditions of his workers. He must meet his quotas and deadlines or else be prepared to be sacrificed to the masses as a scapegoat for lack of consumer goods and other production inadequacies.

B. The Kolkhoznik

1. Inasmuch as it is the kolkhoz chairman and the Party officials who are the primary targets of criticism in the realm of agriculture, there is little critical propaganda directed specifically at the collective farm workers. They are exhorted to do the job at hand faster, now the sowing, now the harvesting, now crop maintenance, etc. They are criticized for ignoring agrotechnical rules, for lags and delays, for sacrificing quality to speed, and for violations of the collective farm statute. Occasionally they are even called to order for eating too much meat. (In the jargon of Soviet propaganda, there is an "excessively large expenditure of cattle in the kolkhozes for so-called internal needs.") By and large, however, the individual kolkhoznik is given the impression that if there is anything wrong or unsatisfactory with his living conditions or his farm's output, it is the fault of the local administration. Here again, the middle elite are used as a scapegoat for the bottom.

THE PARTY

1. Like most Leninist theory when translated into terms of Soviet reality, the theoretical performance of the Party in guiding Soviet affairs bears almost no resemblance to the image of the Party reflected in almost daily criticism of its functionaries. Democratic centralism seems anything but democratic; intra-Party democracy is marked only by its absence; the Party is still suffering from a disease which Lenin diagnosed as "trailing behind the masses" or becoming isolated; criticism and self-criticism are practiced only from the top downward and seldom even then; nepotism and corruption is as rampant here as in other layers of Soviet society; the level of Party education is low and suffers from considerable apathy.

2. The major criticisms of Party officials may be summarized as follows: they lack administrative ability; they lack political training and background and consequently sometimes appoint underlings who have compromised themselves; they are bureaucratic, e.g. fail to implement their own decisions, are "petty fussers"; they fail to take effective action against known shortcomings; they do not check plan fulfillment; they are isolating themselves from the masses rather than learning from them; they are highhanded and dictatorial toward lower Party officials and organs; Party schools are of a low ideological and theoretical level, and there is not enough attention to Marxism-Leninism, the teaching of which is "formalistic" and not creative; personal interests are put above those of State and Party; they practice self-criticism innocuously by only "skimming the surface" or not at all; they think any criticism of them is an "unfair and tendentious assessment" and they stifle it; they have not developed the technique of "guiding" without "taking over"; and finally, the leadership does not realize that the discipline for it and the rank and file is the same and that they are not entitled to special privileges.

3. Aside from the apparent fact that the Party official, like the factory manager and kolkhoz chairman, must be ruthless, corrupt and opportunistic, there are several other inferences which may be drawn from these frequent criticisms and the manner in which they are made.

4. For one thing, both regional criticism and the recently revised Party statutes make it fairly clear that there is an increasing stratification of power in the upper Party echelons at the expense of the primary and lower organs. Higher Party officials are apparently becoming a law unto themselves. It is frequently said that rank and filers are seldom consulted on policy, that they are therefore apathetic to leadership, that they do not attend meetings, and that lower Party organs mechanically copy from their superiors rather than create difficulties by finding fault with them. The new statutes say specifically that there can be only one discipline both for rank and file members and the leaders and that it is the right of any member to criticize any Party official up to the Central Committee.

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5. Lack of attention to leadership in the lower party groups has resulted in an enormous fluidity in the ranks. In Leningrad, for example, it was reported that there were 117 Party Secretaries within a short period of time.

6. There seems to be widespread apathy to Marxist-Leninist instruction. Teaching in Party schools is said to be static. Science is taught as an abstraction and not as an integral part of Communist construction. Lecturers fail to stress the "creative character" of Marxist-Leninist theory. Instruction is carried out in a "formal manner" and not elucidated. Moreover, the schools are characterized by a low level of instruction. Some Komsomol committees behave as if they have lost all interest in the propagandists and political advisers and this is probably due to the fact that the latter have dropped below required standards. Finally, propagandists do not get necessary Party assistance. All this results in inadequate attendance.

7. The selection, distribution and training of Communist Party officials has apparently been turned into a "spoils system." There are frequent statements that one of the major tasks facing the Party is the introduction of a merit system in training, selection and appointment of personnel for leadership. There are countless examples of how this selection and training is being abused. Many officials are criticized, for example, for being economically and politically unsophisticated and not having the capacities or background for their particular jobs.

8. There is mounting evidence to suggest that the Party is also losing whatever close and direct association it once had with the masses. Losing contact with and isolation from the masses is a frequent charge hurled against primary and higher Party officials. The man in the street and on the village is apparently indifferent to Party propaganda. This situation was highlighted by the two recent and rare 6-page issues of PRAVDA which carried popular "discussion" of the new Party statutes and attempted to stimulate popular reaction.

9. There was in the two issues of PRAVDA devoted to this discussion what might be considered a veiled hint to Party members who are also administrators. One questioner asked why in defining eligibility for membership in the Party it was necessary to say "any worker who does not exploit someone else's labor." Such wording becomes subject to wrong interpretation and may give rise to "idle talk," "inasmuch as the system of exploitation has been abolished in the USSR," PRAVDA replied that the wording is justified inasmuch as the 1936 Stalin constitution used the same phraseology and since it may also be of significance for fraternal Communist parties. It is not inconceivable that this wording may have been designed as a caution to the factory boss and kolkhoz chairman against what the Russian worker may regard as Socialist exploitation.

10. Another point which emerges from the regional criticisms of the Party is that there may be developing an acute rivalry between the local Party boss, particularly the ambitious one, and the factory manager or kolkhoz chairman in his area. The Party functionary is consistently warned not to "take over" administration but to "guide" and supervise administrators. Frequently his attention is called to the fact that he must not be overly aggressive just as he must not be indifferent. Apparently the less ambitious Party officials may be content to accept his counterpart in industry or agriculture, criticize only those below him where it is relatively safe, and make deals with them so that they both come off all right. The more ambitious man, on the other hand, may tend to deliberately sharpshoot the administrators in order to curry favor with the Party higher-ups.

11. There is one other point which deserves mentioning. Throughout the soul-searching criticisms, explanations of failure, etc. which occupy so much time of Communist bureaucrats and Party officials, there is a pronounced tendency to employ the former boss, or the former Central Committee, or the former chairman as a scapegoat for all the evils. If this scapegoat can be employed so recklessly and cynically in Communist society, it surely must contribute to the feeling of insecurity in the present leadership, who must realize only too well that with the least slip they may join the scapegoat army of formers.

IDEOLOGY, ARTS, AND LITERATURE

1. The daily criticisms of current Soviet ideology and artistic endeavor point to the emergence and victory of a firmly rooted philistinism and mediocrity in all phases of Soviet intellectual life. There is such a strong tendency to avoid conflict and clashes of opinion that propagandists have lately begun to stress the need for such conflicts, particularly in science; in some particularly sensitive areas such as the Ukraine and Kazakhstan, writers

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refrain from literary activity altogether rather than venture into the dangerous path of political controversy. There is also an allied tendency in literature, frequently criticized, to seek refuge from political storms by a "flight into the past," a sin which seems more heretical, however, in the Central Asian and non-Russian republics than in Great Russia itself. There is almost a complete blanket of heavyhandedness and lack of humor which brings PRAVDA to demand a new Gogol or Saltykov-Shchedrin. The level of Marxist-Leninist ideological material both published and delivered in lectures is said to be of a consistently low and feeble quality. Criticism of intellectual pursuits is permeated with slogans and catchwords, e.g. objectivism, cosmopolitanism, low ideological level, etc., which undoubtedly make the task of criticism easier but which must be received with mixed emotions by the Soviet artists.

2. Along with this obvious tendency toward conformity and mediocrity in Soviet arts and letters, there appears to be a definite political attempt to (a) bind the non-Russian republics and minorities, particularly the Ukraine and Kazakhstan (predominantly Moslem), so close to Great Russia that the historical and intellectual roots of potential disaffection will ultimately be destroyed; and at the same time to (b) prevent the intellectual nourishment of unity among homogeneous non-Russian minorities who might some day threaten Great Russian supremacy. Thus the theory of Stalin friendship among the peoples of the USSR is almost always applied to friendship between Great Russia and a particular minority. It is seldom dealt with as friendship among all the peoples of the USSR.

3. Examples of philistinism and mediocrity in the new Soviet arts and letters are so frequent and occur in so many different contexts that illustration is only a problem of selection.

4. The tendency to conformity and to "play it safe" is one of the significant aspects of Soviet life to be inferred from the criticisms. This tendency is illustrated in: continual harangues against the "no conflict" theory in literature which leads to the presentation of idyllic images of Soviet life but "facilitates the avoidance of political and other controversial issues"; the fact that Radyanska Ukraina is concerned with the "conspicuous silence" of such gifted writers as Kopylenko, Panch, Vladko, Shiyan and Kundzich; the fact that PRAVDA feels it necessary to publicly castigate PRAVDA UKRAINA for the "frank assertion" of some of the latter's correspondents, particularly at Kharkov, Odessa and Kherson, that "it does not pay to send in critical articles because they are either made sterile or filed away"; the constant criticizing of those who "take the path of least resistance" or confine their criticism to "safe areas," such as officials long since dismissed; the necessity to remind Ukrainian poets that they "have not produced a single worthwhile poem on the life of the working class since the last war"; the complete lack of a sense of humor which in its more precious moments is illustrated by calls for increased Socialist Competition among "workers of public dining rooms, tea rooms, buffets and restaurants" and between milkmaids and swineherds; the incessant hammering away at scientists who prefer "cheap amicability" to criticism and clash of opinion, a tendency which has been on the increase lately and may be a significant Soviet realization that such uniformity may seriously hamper their defense effort.

5. The Soviet critical vocabulary also clearly manifests this levelling tendency which brings everything down to the lowest common denominator and the mediocre. Anyone apparently can become a critic so long as he memorizes the right jargon. Thus, an appropriate glossary of some Soviet terminology might be formulated as follows:

Objectivism--considering facts and hypotheses on their own merits without reference to Marxism-Leninism.

Non-political attitude--failing to extract the maximum propaganda value from each topic.

Cosmopolitanism--admiration of Western achievements and Western culture.

Not drawing the proper conclusion--thinking something out for oneself before receiving the Party line.

Bourgeois nationalism--admiring one's own country more than the Soviet Union.

Socialist realism--making literature of production figures.

Devoid of ideological significance--not related in entirety to Marxist ideology.

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6. A second inference which can be drawn from criticisms of Soviet intellectual life is the political attempt to bind non-Russian minorities so close to the USSR as to make them intellectually as well as physically dependent, and simultaneously to prevent the establishment of any close bonds among these people themselves which may take priority over their loyalty to Moscow.

7. The first tendency is illustrated daily in the Soviet press and on the radio by: unceasing talk of the "obligations of the nationalities to the Great Russian people and to Stalin"; the emphasis placed in the Ukraine on the reunion of Western Ukraine with the Soviet Ukraine, the great and disinterested help of Great Russia which made reconstruction possible, the Ukrainian debt to the Great Russians for helping them attain their "eternal dream about their own state, the unification of all their lands," the interrelations between the Russian and Ukrainian languages, the love of Russian culture evidenced by 19th and 18th century Ukrainian writers, the significance of "progressive" prerevolutionary Russian thought for the development of the Ukraine, etc.; and not least the persistent emphasis on the "voluntary" nature of the union of the Kazakhs, the Kirghiz and the Ukrainians with Great Russia and the positive benefits received from this union.

8. It should be noted that there is an enormous effort to convince the important national minorities that they were never oppressed by Tsarist Russia but were actually brought into closer contact with "progressive Russian thought." This current line, a vindication of Tsarist colonialism, is in direct conflict with the two earlier lines on the subject. The first one held all national liberation movements throughout the Russian empire to be justifiable resistance to Tsarist imperialism; the second, which was adopted in 1950, held that Tsarist annexation had a "positive significance" and saved the non-Russians from a "far worse fate" at the hands of the Turks or the British. The current stage was introduced by "Problems of History" in January 1951, which decreed that it was not a question of "the lesser evil" but that union with Russia was the "only possible way out" and enabled these countries to advance towards Communism hand in hand with the Great Russian people. It is of some significance in this connection that prerevolutionary Ukrainian plays are officially frowned upon, while Russian classics, also prerevolutionary, are encouraged.

9. Not only are the national minorities being propagandized to the effect that they are to be historically indebted to the Tsars, but in particular cases, i.e. the Ukraine, they are being told that (a) Russian literature contributed more to the development of Ukrainian cultural life than Ukrainian literature did*, and (b) that Great Russia is the most advanced and outstanding of all nations in the USSR. In the case of the Kazakhs and Kirghiz, these lines are a bit altered and there are discreet warnings against Pan Islamism, Pan Turkism and other "cosmopolitan" tendencies which underestimate the role of Russian culture in their development.

10. This pervasive ideological campaign to extirpate all non-Russian intellectual roots in the Soviet minorities seems to go beyond what is normally called "Russification." It also transcends imperialism. It is an attempt to make all the non-Russian minorities intellectually and culturally dependent on Great Russia much as they are physically and economically dependent. This is apparently being done for political reasons, possibly for fear of the impact of another war on the non-Russian peoples. That it goes beyond "friendship" is clearly indicated by the fact that the Soviet propagandists do not display as much concern over friendship among the Soviet nationalities as they do between each given nationality and Great Russia.

11. In the case of the Ukrainians, this campaign is being waged all the more vehemently. Similarly, there appears to be a growing concern with the allegiance of the Moslem minorities of the USSR. The coming to maturity of a new group of Moslem intellectuals, the first such products of the Soviet regime, is sure to engender difficulties of choice in allegiance.

* A recent criticism of the Shevchenko Institute of Ukrainian Literature's first volume of the collected works of Kotliarevsky said that the editors did not bring out that he "owed more to the Russian literature of the 18th century than to his predecessors in Ukrainian literature."

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